

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of providing promotional material to consumers comprising:

detecting a business necessity in an inventory management system of a merchant computer system, the business necessity including the merchant receiving a shipment of goods;

detecting products to be promoted based on the detected business necessity;

establishing a computer communications session between the merchant computer system and a third-party remote shopping stimulation system;

receiving in the third-party remote shopping stimulation system a merchant request from the merchant computer system to stimulate commerce for the detected products;

reading with said third-party remote shopping stimulation system consumer purchase information from the merchant computer system, said consumer purchase information comprising consumer identifying information, purchased product information, and communication mode information indicating in which communication mode promotional material can be delivered to a particular consumer, wherein the purchased product information includes product expiration information and product identifying information;

based at least in part on said consumer purchase information, identifying one or more potential consumers who have previously purchased one or more of the detected products;

determining based upon predetermined product attributes irrespective of merchant inventories that at least one of the detected products is an obsolete product ~~when a new or~~

~~alternate version of the at least one of the detected products has at least one among current availability and expected availability within a predetermined time period, and~~
ascertaining which of said identified potential consumers previously purchased at least one of said obsolete products;

in said third-party remote shopping stimulation system, generating promotional material for said new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products for the one or more potential customers ascertained as having previously purchased the at least one of said detected products identified as an obsolete product, and associating said promotional material corresponding to said new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products with said ascertained consumers;

determining for each of said identified consumers whether promotional material can be delivered via regular mail, electronic mail, telephone communication, or Internet communication, wherein the determination for each particular identified consumer is based upon communication mode information uniquely corresponding to the particular consumer; and

making said promotional material available to said identified consumers using a promotional material delivery system, wherein said delivery system delivers promotional material to each particular identified consumer via the communication mode indicated by the communication mode information uniquely corresponding to the particular consumer.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, said identifying step further comprising determining a product consumption rate from said consumer purchase information to identify said one or more potential consumers of the merchant-specified products.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said promotional material and said consumer purchase information include person-to-person transactions and Internet-based transactions.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein each said step is performed responsive to the merchant system detecting a business necessity corresponding to said new or alternate versions of said product identified as an obsolete product, wherein said business necessity corresponds to a merchant of said new or alternate versions of said product identified as an obsolete product having excess inventory of said new or alternate versions of said product identified as an obsolete product.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said consumer purchase information is read from a purchase history database comprising consumer purchase information for a plurality of different merchants, and wherein the third-party remote shopping stimulation system responds to merchant requests from said plurality of different merchants.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more merchant-specified products comprise a service.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, said product information comprising product expiration information and product identifying information, wherein said step of identifying one or more potential consumers of products is based upon the expiration information of products.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said promotional material made available to said identified consumers is in electronic format.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said promotional material made available to said identified consumers is in printed format.

10-24. (Cancelled).

25. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented system for providing promotional material to consumers comprising:

a merchant computer system including an inventory management system, means for detecting a business necessity in the inventory management system, and means for detecting products to be promoted based on the detected business necessity, wherein the business necessity includes the merchant receiving a shipment of goods;

a third-party remote shopping stimulation system; and

means for establishing a computer communications session between the merchant computer system and the third-party remote shopping stimulation system;

the third-party remote shopping stimulation system including:

means for receiving a merchant request from the merchant computer system to stimulate commerce for the detected products;

means for reading consumer purchase information from the merchant computer system, the consumer purchase information comprising consumer identifying information, purchased product information, and communication mode information indicating in which communication mode promotional material can be delivered to a particular consumer, wherein the purchased product information includes product expiration information and product identifying information;

means for, based at least in part on the consumer purchase information, identifying one or more potential consumers who have previously purchased one or more of the detected products;

means for determining based upon predetermined product attributes irrespective of merchant inventories that at least one of the detected products is an obsolete product ~~when a new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products has at least one among current availability and expected availability~~

~~within a predetermined time period~~, and ascertaining which of the identified potential consumers previously purchased at least one of said obsolete products;

means for generating promotional material for the new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products for the one or more potential customers ascertained as having previously purchased the at least one of the detected products identified as an obsolete product, and associating the promotional material corresponding to the new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products with the ascertained consumers;

means for determining for each of the identified consumers whether promotional material can be delivered via regular mail, electronic mail, telephone communication, or Internet communication, wherein the determination for each particular identified consumer is based upon communication mode information uniquely corresponding to the particular consumer; and

a promotional material delivery system for making the promotional material available to the identified consumers, wherein the delivery system delivers promotional material to each particular identified consumer via the communication mode indicated by the communication mode information uniquely corresponding to the particular consumer.

26. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, further comprising:

a consumer purchase information data structure for storing consumer identifying information and product information corresponding to a purchase transaction.

27. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, further comprising:

a commerce system for collecting the consumer purchase information in a computer communications network environment.

28. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, further comprising:

a point of sale system for collecting the consumer purchase information from in store and Internet purchases.

29. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable storage, having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

detecting a business necessity in an inventory management system of a merchant computer system, the business necessity including the merchant receiving a shipment of goods;

detecting products to be promoted based on the detected business necessity;

establishing a computer communications session between the merchant computer system and a third-party remote shopping stimulation system;

receiving in the third-party remote shopping stimulation system a merchant request from the merchant computer system to stimulate commerce for the detected products;

reading with said third-party remote shopping stimulation system consumer purchase information from the merchant computer system, said consumer purchase information comprising consumer identifying information, purchased product information, and communication mode information indicating in which communication mode promotional material can be delivered to a particular consumer, wherein the purchased product information includes product expiration information and product identifying information;

based at least in part on said consumer purchase information, identifying one or more potential consumers who have previously purchased one or more of the detected products;

determining based upon predetermined product attributes irrespective of merchant inventories that at least one of the detected products is an obsolete product ~~when a new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products has at least one among~~

~~current availability and expected availability within a predetermined time period~~, and ascertaining which of said identified potential consumers previously purchased at least one of said obsolete products;

in said third-party remote shopping stimulation system, generating promotional material for said new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products for the one or more potential customers ascertained as having previously purchased the at least one of said detected products identified as an obsolete product, and associating said promotional material corresponding to said new or alternate version of the at least one of the detected products with said ascertained consumers;

determining for each of said identified consumers whether promotional material can be delivered via regular mail, electronic mail, telephone communication, or Internet communication, wherein the determination for each particular identified consumer is based upon communication mode information uniquely corresponding to the particular consumer; and

making said promotional material available to said identified consumers using a promotional material delivery system, wherein said delivery system delivers promotional material to each particular identified consumer via the communication mode indicated by the communication mode information uniquely corresponding to the particular consumer.